



c/o Takoma Park Municipal Building • 7500 Maple Avenue • Takoma Park, MD 20912

February 1, 2005

**To: Mayor and Council, Takoma Park, MD**  
**From: Safe Roadways Committee**

**Subject: Takoma Park Safe Roadways Committee Suggestions for Philadelphia Avenue and Associated Streets Between Carroll and Takoma Avenues**

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PLEASE NOTE: we are absolutely convinced that a high level of effective community involvement is key to the solving of pedestrian/traffic safety issues.

Within the context of that view, we present the following as a single, comprehensive package for the remedy of the entire range of safety issues that have been observed by community residents for many years and that are being currently discussed by individual community members, the Old Town Residents Association, the PTAs and officials of the three affected public schools, staff members of the State Highway Administration and of the City of Takoma Park, and others. We agree with most of today's traffic safety experts who say that safety problems cannot be solved unless they are addressed through the three "Es" -- Enforcement, Engineering and Education.

As the process continues, we will be pleased to contribute our views on prioritizing the implementation of remedies.

The following has been examined and approved by the members of the Takoma Park Safe Roadways Committee, but the primary responsibility lies with the drafters of this document:

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## ISSUES

There have been innumerable accidents, near-accidents and a number of fatalities involving either vehicles, pedestrians or both on Philadelphia Avenue from Carroll to Takoma Avenues and on associated streets.

This part of State Route 410 is narrow, sections of it are windy and hilly, and all of it is located in a densely populated residential area. It is used by vehicles and pedestrians going to and from the high rise apartments on Maple, the Takoma Park

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Library, the Takoma Park Municipal Building, and four schools: Takoma Park Elementary, Piney Branch Elementary, Takoma Park Middle School, and the Morgan Day Care Center. (Aside from Philadelphia Avenue, children walking to school also use Grant Avenue and Hodges Lane, which feed into Piney Branch immediately northeast of the Philadelphia-Piney Branch intersection.) Indeed, students living in the immediate area are required to walk to school; busses are not provided.

The Takoma Park Fire Station is located on Carroll at the mouth of Philadelphia and emergency vehicles going at high speeds frequently use Philadelphia.

Aside from serving local-destination traffic, this section of State Route 410 serves as a main thoroughfare for commuters traveling between the Silver Spring and College Park areas, and intersects with Piney Branch Road, a main thoroughfare for commuters traveling between the District of Columbia and areas northeast of Takoma Park.

Crossing Philadelphia at Cedar Avenue and at Holly Avenue is particularly dangerous at present, and vehicle and pedestrian traffic will soon become much heavier due to the transformation of the Municipal Building and Library into a Community Center at the intersection of Maple and Philadelphia. This was first made clear in the Takoma Park staff report re: options for community center sites January 21, 2000.

***We urge the City of Takoma Park to work with the State Highway Administration to address the dangers vehicles and pedestrians face when using Philadelphia Avenue and associated streets from Carroll to Takoma Avenues. We urge the City and the State to take a comprehensive approach to the problem, which can become a model for how the state can work with municipalities to ensure pedestrian safety. However, if State-City action to address these dangers does not appear to be possible before the completion of the current phase of the Community Center project, we urge the City to do everything it can independently.***

***Recognizing that the state has a strong interest in traffic flow on state highways and the city has a strong interest in pedestrian safety within Takoma Park, the Safe Roadways Committee proposes numerous interventions that would simultaneously enhance both.***

#### **SAFE ROADWAYS COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS**

Our suggestions are based on the assumption that the issues cannot be effectively addressed unless we consider the entire area along Philadelphia Avenue and nearby streets from Carroll to Takoma.

The suggestions are numbered for easy reference only. The engineering suggestions proceed generally southeast to northwest along Philadelphia.



### **Enforcement measures:**

**1. Crossing guards:** Residents report that the crossing guard at Holly and Philadelphia during the school opening and closing hours has proven to be an effective safety measure, and this program should be continued. We recommend that an additional crossing guard be **immediately** placed at Cedar and Philadelphia at the entrance to the library parking lot. Last year a crossing guard was posted at Cedar and Philadelphia for one day, and residents report that there was a discernable increase in the perception that cars were being driven more carefully.

**2. Enforcement of no parking zone in turnaround area on Grant Ave. at City Building:** The recently installed sidewalk next to Piney Branch Elementary has made it safer for students to get to both TPES and PBES. Many students use this sidewalk and then cross the turnaround area to continue on the path to Takoma ES. When cars park in the turnaround area, students must pass between them to get to the path to Takoma Park ES. Drivers and walkers cannot see each other because of the parked cars.

**3. Law clarification:** Recently, the state doubled the fine for drivers of vehicles who do not stop for pedestrians in crosswalks. This shows how serious policy-makers are about enforcing the law. Yet, police officers believe that the law does not require cars to stop for all pedestrians whose intention to cross is clear by where they are standing **at** a crosswalk, but only for pedestrians who are actually standing **in** crosswalks. This is an extremely dangerous interpretation, and few parents are willing to coach their children to step out in front of oncoming cars in order to get the cars to stop for them. We have been told that in Annapolis cars stop for pedestrians **at** crosswalks, and we recommend that the city and the state look at that example. In the meantime, we urge the Takoma Park police department to enforce the law, even if it means they will enforce it only for people **in** crosswalks.

**4. Make enforcement here a priority:** Because of the high concentration of students and other pedestrians along Philadelphia, enforcement of traffic and pedestrian laws must become a high priority for the Takoma Park police department, especially during hours of school opening and closing.

### **Engineering measures:**

**1. Diagonal parking should be created on that section of Maple Avenue that intersects with Philadelphia on the east side,** where Maple is the widest. This would tend to narrow Maple and slow down traffic.

**2. A pedestrian island should be constructed in the roadway where Old Philadelphia Ave, Cedar Avenues and the TP Library driveway feed into Philadelphia.** This is the widest part of Philadelphia Avenue, and is in the most direct walking route for many students to Piney Branch Elementary, Takoma Middle and Takoma Elementary as well as other citizens walking to/from the local neighborhood and City Buildings. It is at the foot of a steep incline going northwest and is an area where many cars seem to be going at high speeds. An island would calm traffic by narrowing



the street, forcing traffic to stay in separate lanes, and would provide an area of safety for pedestrians.

**3. A pedestrian-operated traffic light should be installed at the intersection of Philadelphia Ave., Cedar Avenues and the TP Library driveway.** While there are warning signs and a crosswalk at this intersection, compliance by drivers is very low. In addition, traffic congestion in the mornings and afternoons forces pedestrians to walk between stopped cars in the crosswalk where it is hard for approaching cars to see them. The light recommended for this intersection would be green on 410 and blink red toward Cedar and the library parking lot at all times unless a pedestrian pushed a button to turn it red. This would maximize traffic flow on 410 while also greatly enhancing pedestrian safety.

**4. A similar traffic light** should be installed at intersection of Philadelphia Ave. and Holly. This light would remain green on 410 unless a pedestrian pushed a button to turn it red or a car approaching 410 on Holly from either direction tripped a switch to turn the light green on Holly and red on 410. The four-way stop signs currently at Philadelphia and Holly Avenues were put in place primarily to allow cars to enter Philadelphia from the steep hill of Holly Avenue. However, there have been numerous accidents here as drivers either ignore the signs or are confused as to how and when to yield right-of-way.

**5. Install raised, clearly marked and painted crosswalks** at Cedar and Holly crossing 410. We support the suggestion made by consultant Dan Burton, that wide, raised crosswalks would effectively slow traffic and force drivers to yield for pedestrians.

**6. Traffic lane and street curb markings:**

- A very visible, raised median line should be embedded down the center of Philadelphia from Carroll to Takoma to better mark the two lanes, and to encourage drivers to stay in their lane. The need for this is illustrated by a recent serious accident in which a car injured a child crossing 410 at Holly: A driver pulled into the on-coming lane in order to go around a stopped bus and struck a child who was crossing in front of the bus. The raised line needs to be high enough to discourage dangerous behavior but low enough for emergency vehicles to "jump" it when necessary.
- Curbs on Philadelphia should be painted with bright, luminescent paint, especially on the steep, windy hills between Carroll and Maple and between Piney Branch and Takoma.

**7. Close off intersection of Old Philadelphia and Philadelphia Avenues,** thus preventing cars from making a left turn onto to Philadelphia from this very dangerous spot. This would also make it much less likely for drivers to pass on the inside lane cars that now stop for pedestrians in the crosswalk at Cedar and 410. (The house and garage that face Old Philadelphia would still have access to Maple Avenue.)

**8. Silent "rumble-strip-type" traffic calmers:** Material should be embedded in the Philadelphia roadway that acts as a silent rumble strip slowing traffic. This would be particularly useful on the



steep slopes between Carroll and Maple Avenues and between Piney Branch Road and Takoma Avenue where Baltimore and Boston Avenues feed into Philadelphia.

**9. Close off the extension of Chestnut Avenue** on the southwest side of Philadelphia Avenue that runs between Philadelphia and Piney Branch. This would force cars wanting to turn onto Philadelphia to go to the intersection of Piney Branch and Philadelphia.

**10. A red light camera should be installed** at the intersection of Piney Branch and Philadelphia to discourage drivers from running lights.

**11. Install a sidewalk on east side of Piney Branch Road between Grant Ave and Philadelphia Avenues.** This section of Piney Branch Road, which is adjacent to Takoma Park Middle School, and within TP city limits, is the only part of Piney Branch Road that does not have a sidewalk. Lack of a sidewalk here forces students on the southeast side of Piney Branch Road to cross over Piney Branch at Philadelphia and then cross back over at Ray Drive to get to Takoma Middle, a very unsafe route.

**12. Install crosswalks on east and south parts of intersection of Philadelphia Ave and Piney Branch Road.** Currently there are only two crosswalks at this very busy intersection; one across Philadelphia on the west side of Piney Branch, and a second on Piney Branch on the north side of Philadelphia. This means students walking to Takoma Middle must cross either Philadelphia or Piney Branch Road during rush hour and in morning darkness without a crosswalk.

**13. Install crosswalks at Holly and Grant/Darwin Avenues.** We would also suggest that the crosswalks recently painted across Grant Ave at Holly/Darwin Aves be modified to provide a more direct walking route from the sidewalk on Holly Ave proceeding straight across Grant/Darwin to the sidewalk on the north side of Grant Ave. Because of the large numbers of students traveling on Grant Ave before and after school, we would request that crosswalks be painted across Holly and on Grant at the west side of the intersection; completing the "box".

### **Educational measures:**

**1. Education Program at Schools:** There should be a full education program at the four schools cited above that is aimed at building awareness of the dangers when using Philadelphia and nearby streets, perhaps financed at least in part by a grant we understand is available from the State. We understand that a similar program is getting underway at schools that draw their student population from the neighborhoods around the Langley Crossroads. The schools should also examine the re-institution of student safety patrols to work with the crossing guards.

**2. Additional Signage:** We propose signage that alerts drivers to the fact that they are traveling in a residential area and that they are expected to yield to pedestrians in cross-walks. Signs should also remind pedestrians that police enforce pedestrian safety laws. Also, signs are needed to warn drivers that Philadelphia Avenue is particularly hazardous when wet.